

# Tips and Tricks for Successful Searching on FamilySearch.org

## Change in Search Methods

- Formerly, too much information eliminated records that did not contain all in search query
- Results now show records that show only part of information in query
- Example: Can now show birth state and receive SSDI results
- Example: Can now include birth date and receive marriage records where age was not included


Any record in FamilySearch's 1839 collections can be found if a few searching tips and tricks are used.

## Tip 1: Online Search Resources

Get Help > Help Center > Pull Down Menu: Search

### How to Search

FamilySearch has records that span billions of names across hundreds of collections, including birth, marriage, death, census, and other original records. Most of these records are indexed, so you can search for records that identify your ancestors.



- Frequently Asked Questions ▼ Open
- Learning Center Video Courses ▼ Open
- Tips and Tricks ▼ Open
- Research Strategies ▼ Open
- Other Resources ▼ Open

Resources for searching tip and tricks in the middle of the night.

## Tip 2: Sign In [Sign In | Join For Free](#)

Many copyright owners will not allow access to their data unless the user has signed in to FamilySearch. There is no cost to registration or access to the website. One of the stated purposes for FamilySearch is to provide access to data at no charge to the user.

## Tip 3: Wildcards

There is no minimum of letters needed, but the more letters used, the closer the results will be to the desired name. Wildcards may be used for the first letter.

?- may be substituted for 1 letter

\*- may be substituted for 0 – unlimited letters, which can be a help, but can also add more letters than desired

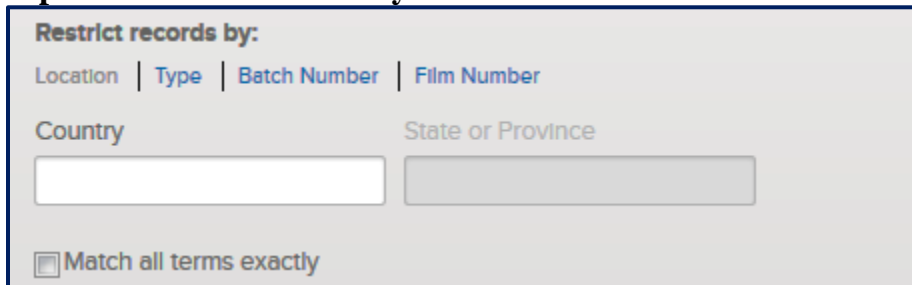
#### Tip 4: Parent Search

- Search using father's name and mother's given name
- Search using father's surname and mother's maiden name
- Search using father's name and mother's given & maiden name
- Search using father's name only
- Search using mother's name (with maiden name)
- Search using mother's name (with married name)

#### Tip 5: Spouse Search

- Search with husband's name
- Search with wife's name – if married before search with 1<sup>st</sup> marriage surname
- Using the spouse's name as the only search criterion may be more successful than in combination with the primary desired person.

#### Tip 6: Restrict Records By:



Restrict records by:

Location | Type | Batch Number | Film Number

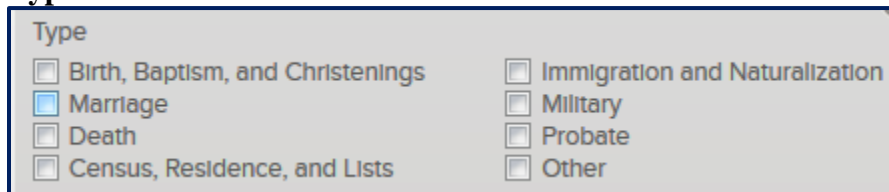
Country  State or Province

Match all terms exactly

Search results may be restricted by:

**Location** – country and state or province (can be *very* helpful if looking for information from only one country and/or one state or province)

**Type** –



Type

<input type="checkbox"/> Birth, Baptism, and Christenings	<input type="checkbox"/> Immigration and Naturalization
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> Military
<input type="checkbox"/> Death	<input type="checkbox"/> Probate
<input type="checkbox"/> Census, Residence, and Lists	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

**Batch Number:** International Genealogical Index Batch (IGI is an event oriented index of births, marriage and deaths)

**Film Number:** Data has been extracted from some films and may be searched for names located on a specific film number.

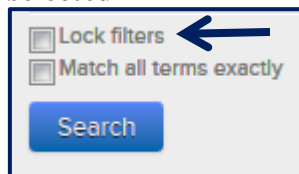
#### Tip 7: Use Filters

Start with a global search entering minimal information (such as surname only) then click on the ▼.  ▼ It will raise a set of filters.

- Filter your results by:**  
[Learn more](#)
- Collections
  - Birthplace
  - Birth Year
  - Marriage Place
  - Marriage Year
  - Residence Place
  - Residence Year
  - Death Place
  - Death Year
  - Other Place
  - Other Year
  - Gender

This set of filters will restrict results to match the specific criterion that has been selected. Many have felt the frustration of researching for information from one state or time period and getting results that do not match the requested information. This set of filters eliminates that problem.

If any change in the original data entered in the global search will erase all filters selected from this set, unless the “Lock Filters” box is selected



When filters have been selected for specific data, such as a marriage in a specific location, it will not keep other data involving the search person from other record types and locations. (i.e. marriage information requested in a specific place and time limit, may still allow the name in the search to show as the parent of a deceased child in another time period and place.)

### Tip 8: Variation of Name Spelling

FamilySearch’s set of name variations on which it searches can be found at: [labs.familysearch.org](http://labs.familysearch.org) > Standard Finder

#### Standard Finder

Standard Finder provides access to standardized information for names, locations, and dates. These databases are used by several FamilySearch applications to assist researchers in searching for exact spellings as well as for indexers who enter information used for Historical Record Search.

This site will identify the current name of towns that no longer exist, but will also show the variation in spellings of names on which it searches. i.e., for the name Roberson, it searches on a large variety of spellings, but does not include Robinson, which is one of the main mistakes in spelling and indexing, which shows that a separate search for the family for the name Robinson to make a complete search for information for the family.

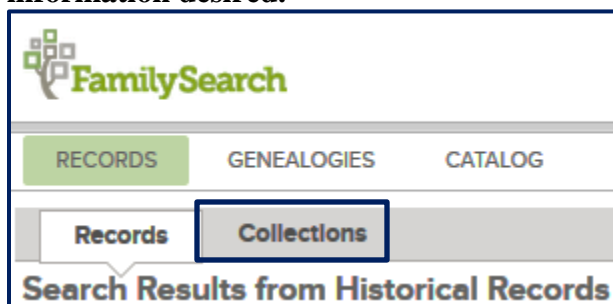
Be sure to search for other members of the family if the original search does not produce the desired results.

Barbara Renick's excellent handout with additional information on search variations can be found in her *Eleven Layers of Online Searches at FamilySearch.org*:

[http://s3.amazonaws.com/rootstech/original/RENICK\\_Eleven\\_Layers\\_at\\_FamilySearch\\_2013.pdf?1359567916](http://s3.amazonaws.com/rootstech/original/RENICK_Eleven_Layers_at_FamilySearch_2013.pdf?1359567916)

### Tip 9: Use Collections Feature

After using the filtering features, the Collections search narrows to the specific record and information desired.



### Tip 10: Always look at the Image, if available

The index is not perfect and does not contain all the information available in the original record. IF the image is available, examine *all* data on the record.

### Tip 11: Do not overlook the Browse Images



Way-Pointing is the name given to the process of grouping images for better accessibility.

Browse images are in smaller groups of images than are on microfilm reels. While the images cannot be accessed through an index, they are identified in groups.

Some of the records have internal indexes.

Find a Browse Collection of interest and see how it is broken

down in groups.